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Outcomes of the in-depth reviews carried out by the Conference of European Statisticians Bureau

Outcome of the in-depth review of measuring social protection

Note by the Secretariat

Addendum

Summary

This note provides information on the outcome of the in-depth review of measurement of social protection, carried out by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians in January 2014.

The review summarised the international statistical activities in measuring social protection, identified issues and problems, and made recommendations on possible follow-up actions in this area.

The in-depth review was based on a paper by the Secretariat. The updated in-depth review paper is available as document ECE/CES/2014/9.

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I. Introduction

1. Each year, the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) reviews selected statistical areas in depth. The purpose of the reviews is to improve coordination of statistical activities in the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), identify gaps or duplication of work, and address emerging issues. These reviews focus on strategic issues and highlight concerns of statistical offices of both a conceptual and coordinating nature.

2. The CES Bureau selected social protection for an in-depth review at its meeting in February 2013. In the absence of a volunteer country to prepare the review paper, the Secretariat undertook this task. The review summarised the international statistical activities in measuring social protection, identified issues and problems, and made recommendations on possible follow-up actions in this area.

II. In-depth review discussion and decision by the Bureau

3. The Bureau carried out the in-depth review in January 2014 based on a paper by the Secretariat. The updated version of the in-depth review paper is presented as document ECE/CES/2014/9. The conclusions and recommendations resulting from the in-depth review are presented in section V of this document.

4. The following points were raised in the discussion:

(a) Measuring social protection is a complex area of high policy importance. It covers a broad range of issues and involves different institutions at national and international level, many of these from outside official statistics;

(b) The differences in measuring social protection stem from different uses of the data, and it may not be possible to impose universal standards for all purposes. However, a certain level of harmonization is needed to facilitate international comparability and ensure that the data are based on sound methodology. There is currently a momentum to define basic standards in this area. The Social Protection Inter-agency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B) is working towards harmonization in this field;

(c) Any possible future work on this topic under CES should add value to the existing initiatives;

(d) The suggestions for future work included organizing a CES seminar to discuss the issues and challenges in this area. The following potential work areas were mentioned: developing a small set of internationally comparable indicators on social protection, considering the recipient side of social protection, the parts of society not covered by social protection, use of administrative data, and funding of the social security. It was noted that some aspects of measuring social protection could be considered within the Task Force on poverty.

5. The Bureau recognised the need for more harmonisation in measuring social protection. The secretariat, in consultation with OECD, World Bank and ILO will inform the Bureau about the outcome of the meeting of the SPIAC-B group in May 2014. On this basis, the Bureau will decide about possible further work related to measuring social protection at its October 2014 meeting.

III. Proposal for the Conference

6. The Conference of European Statisticians is invited to endorse the outcome of the in-depth review on social protection, and take note of the updated in-depth review paper by the Secretariat (ECE/CES/2014/9).